



Smallpox Brief: Dec 15, 2003

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Topic: CALIFORNIA GETS TOP MARKS IN TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH BIOTERROR PREPAREDNESS STUDY

SACRAMENTO - A study issued by The Trust for America's Health ranks California tied with three other states for the national non-profit organization's highest preparedness rating. The report, "Ready or Not? Protecting the Public's Health in the Age of Bioterrorism," released Dec. 11, 2003, examines 10 key indicators to assess areas of improvement and ongoing vulnerability in the nation's effort to prepare against bioterrorism and other large-scale health emergencies.

The report confirms that California is one of the nation's leaders in making progress to expand health emergency communications networks, upgrade public health laboratories and develop initial bioterrorism response plans. The report also suggests, however, that as a nation, the U.S. is only modestly more prepared for health emergencies and other bioterrorism events such as smallpox than it was before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. California and the rest of the nation still face major concerns, including: an impending shortage of trained professionals in the public health workforce; disagreements between state and local health agencies over resource allocation; and tie-ups of much of the federal bioterrorism funding due to bureaucratic obstacles.

"This report confirms that our smallpox and other emergency preparedness efforts have improved our ability to respond to a bioterrorism event or other large scale public health emergencies," said Dr. Kevin Reilly, Deputy Director of Prevention Services, "but the report also makes clear that there is continued work to be done to face both manmade and natural health disasters."

For more information about California's efforts to prepare for a smallpox or other bioterrorism attack, please visit <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/>.

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